

priority in naming his plants; nor, when neglecting it, can his alterations usually be considered as improvements. Under *Polygonum aviculare* we find the *P. maritimum*, &c., of Ray (it should be *P. marinum*) placed as the synonym of a variety, which is called *littorale* after Link, and the *P. Roberti* (Lois.) added. This is erroneous, as Dr. Gray will probably admit when he has read the remarks of Grenier (*Flore de France*, vol. iii. pp. 51 & 52) upon these plants. There appears to be no valid cause for doubting that *P. littorale* (Link) is synonymous with the above-quoted plant of Ray and the *P. Raii* of Babington; and that the *P. Roberti* (Lois.) is closely allied to *P. aviculare*, if, indeed, it is more than a maritime state of that species, having none of the distinctive characters of the *P. littorale*.

But we will not enter further into such minute points, and simply add that Dr. Gray's book deserves our highest approbation.

*A Dictionary of Botanical Terms.* By the Rev. J. S. HENSLOW, M.A., Professor of Botany in the University of Cambridge. Post 8vo. Groombridge, London.

We have just received a copy of this botanical glossary, and are able to award to it a considerable amount of praise. It is issued from the press in an elegant form, and is illustrated "by nearly two hundred cuts." Although small, these cuts are usually quite sufficient to convey the requisite information; but nevertheless, we should have been pleased to have seen them executed upon rather a larger scale.

As the book was issued very slowly, in connexion with Maund's 'Botanist' and 'Botanic Garden,' some slight discrepancy between the mode of treatment of terms in its earlier pages and that of similar ones occurring towards the end of the alphabet, is not wonderful. The author's plan improved as he advanced with his task.

The intention seems to have been to include all the terms which are used technically in botany, and, to a great extent, this has been done. As many of the terms can scarcely be said to be now in use, we wish that the Professor had marked those which he considers obsolete.

Professor Henslow is well known to possess an especial power of conveying to his pupils the meaning of the hard words used in botany in far too great abundance, and to the employment of which he is thought to be more attached than we think desirable; we therefore expected to find the definitions both clear and excellent in this book, and are not disappointed. Upon the whole, we consider this Dictionary one of the best that has appeared, and strongly recommend it. It is convenient in size, cheap in price, and at the same time contains, as we deduce from a remark in the preface, about 2000 words.

After rather a careful examination of it, we do not find much to notice as requiring amendment: certainly *laciniate* is wrongly explained by *fringed*: *asper* is omitted, and its definition transferred

to *scaber*: no distinction, such as is now usual, is made between *triangular*, *triquetrous*, and *trigonous*: *cuspidate* is defined as almost, if not quite, synonymous with *acuminate*, but most modern descriptive botanists distinguish carefully between them, considering a cuspidate organ to be one which is abruptly acuminate, *i. e.* bluntly rounded at the end, but with a point large at its base but gradually narrowed upwards placed upon it.

*The British Botanist's Field-book: a Synopsis of the British Flowering Plants.* By A. P. CHILDS, F.R.C.S. Post 8vo. London, 1857.

We are sorry that it is not in our power to give a favourable account of this book, for the author's object is manifestly good. He has undertaken that which we believe to be nearly impossible, namely to produce a book containing "the essential marks, and those alone, by which each order, genus, and species may be distinguished." Modestly, he does not pretend to have fully succeeded, but the very fact of publication proves his belief that to a great extent he has done so. It might be supposed that the task is not so very difficult, for we find authors like Arnott and Babington giving, in their respective Floras, something which at the first view might be supposed to supply the materials for such a book as this before us. Upon a more careful examination, it will be found that this is far from being the case; for Dr. Arnott's tabular views of the orders and genera are accompanied by fuller characters, by which the group may be determined with greater certainty; and the italicized parts of the specific characters in Mr. Babington's Manual are so prepared as to help in the determination of the species by showing to what point it is desirable that attention should primarily be given, but do not profess to distinguish the species from all its allies inhabiting this country, far less from those found upon the European continent, for an examination of the remainder of the character is requisite to do that. Even supposing that the present author had succeeded in his object, we should consider the book as likely to be more injurious than otherwise to the science of botany. Great advances have been made of late years in our knowledge of the plants of Britain, and many additions to the list discovered, which even Mr. Childs allows to be deserving of notice. But would this advance have taken place if our descriptive books had been written by men who confined their study to Britain alone, or, if their reading was more extensive, showed no trace of it in their books? Should not we have remained in the condition in which botany stagnated for so many years, when collectors were satisfied if they could force their specimens to conform to some description given in the works of Smith; and when it was supposed, as we well remember, that no new plants remained to be added to our flora? In the book before us, and in others in this respect resembling it, which we have thought it unnecessary to notice, there is nothing to cause the reader to suppose that further knowledge is desirable. He has discovered the name of his plant, or thinks that

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